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ABSTRACT

Socialization practices as they are directed at boys and girls and as they relate to need for achievement, especially to differences in levels of need, were compared in a study population of 42 fifth-grade children, 21 boys and 21 girls, and their mothers. Both mothers and children were given the standard TAT measure scored for need for achievement; the children were given the Mandler-Sarason Test Anxiety Scale; and mothers were given the Endler Anxiety Scale. Mothers and children were given questionnaires to measure their different views of the socialization practices and interactions between them. Results of the study showed that low need for achievement boys were getting inadequate support and too much control; low need for achievement girls were receiving support but no goals or standards were being set and there were inadequate controls; high need for achievement boys showed no significant differences in the reported amounts of any types of interaction; and high need for achievement girls reported significantly more positive interaction than negative control, but none of the other comparisons were significant. The important factors in the socialization of need for achievement appear to be expectations and demands for achievement and independence made at an appropriate age, around age 5 in this sample, coupled with positive interaction or support and a moderate amount of control. (DB)

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SOCIALIZATION OF NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN BOYS AND GIRLS

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The theory of achievement motivation has been applied most successfully in predicting the performance of men in a variety of achievement-arousing situations. Various studies done with women have generally produced results that have been inconsistent both with each other and with the results found with men. There have also been studies that dealt with the socialization of the need for achievement (n Ach) in boys. Winterbottom (1958), studying the socialization of n Ach in boys, found that mothers of boys with high n Ach expected independent accomplishment and self-reliant mastery behavior at earlier ages than did mothers of sons with low n Ach. They also placed fewer restrictions on their sons. In contrast, there has been little research on the socialization of n Ach in girls. Because n Ach is considered to be a stable personality trait acquired early in life, research on the socialization antecedents of n Ach with girls might help to explain the extreme variability of findings with adult women.

The purposes of this study were to compare socialization practices as they are directed at boys and at girls and as they relate to n Ach, especially to differences in levels of n Ach. Two levels of n Ach, labeled high and low, were determined by rank ordering of all 42 *Ss* on n Ach scores derived from the TAT projective measure. The group was then divided at the median. Those above the median were considered in the high n Ach group and those below, in the low n Ach group. This allowed comparisons to be made in terms of both sex and n Ach.

The major questions asked were (*a*) Are there consistent differences in socialization practices related (i) to differences in strength of n Ach and (ii) to the child's sex, and (*b*) Are socialization practices which produce high or low n Ach in boys also related in the same fashion to high and low n Ach in girls? It seemed possible that there might be an optimal pattern of socialization for producing high n Ach or low n Ach. If so, the question of interest is whether the optimal patterns are the same for boys as for girls.

METHOD

The *Ss* were 42 fifth-grade children, 21 boys and 21 girls, and their mothers. They were randomly selected from all fifth-grade children in a public elementary school in a stable working-class area. Both mothers and children were given the standard TAT measure scored for n Ach. Children were given the Mandler-Sarason Test Anxiety Scale for children as a measure of fear of failure and mothers were given the Endler Anxiety Scale. Mothers and children were each given questionnaires to measure their different views of the socialization practices and interactions between them. The child-raising-practices questionnaire given to mothers was derived from Winterbottom (1958) and Feld (1967). The questionnaire given to children centered on patterns of interaction and control between mothers and children (Danziger, 1971).

RESULTS

On the projective measure boys showed a somewhat higher mean level of n Ach than girls ($p < .075$), whereas girls showed higher fear of failure ($p < .025$). Dividing the sex groups by level of n Ach, these results were found to be mainly the result of differences between the high n Ach groups. Low n Ach boys and girls showed no significant differences on either n Ach or fear of failure. High n Ach boys showed a somewhat higher mean level of n Ach ($p < .10$) and significantly lower fear of failure ($p < .05$) than the high n Ach girls. The range of n Ach scores for boys was from 3 - 11, and for girls 3 - 7, in the high n Ach groups.

Children's n Ach and fear of failure were correlated with their mother's n Ach and fear of failure. Boys' n Ach and fear of failure both correlated positively with their mothers'. For girls the pattern was different: n Ach correlated negatively with their mothers' while fear of failure correlated positively. Because of the small number of *Ss* the correlations, although moderate, were not significant.

The child-raising-practices questionnaire given to the mothers asked for the age at which the child was expected to have mastered a number of different behaviors, i.e., "to have interests and hobbies of his own" (from the independence subscale) and "to do well in school on his own" (from the achievement subscale). On 20 of the 24 items, demands for mastery were made earlier on boys than on girls. The questionnaire was divided into four subscales: caretaking, restrictions, independence, and achievement. On all four subscales mean age of demands for mastery was earlier for boys than for girls.

Dividing the sex groups by level of n Ach and looking at the scales of major interest, independence and achievement, the patterns of demands on high and low n Ach boys and girls were opposite. On both subscales, mastery demands were made earlier on high n Ach girls than on low n Ach girls. For boys, on both subscales demands for mastery were made later on high n Ach boys than on low n Ach boys. A possible explanation is suggested by looking at the mean ages of mastery demands by sex and level of n Ach. The mean age for girls was higher than that for boys, even when high n Ach girls were compared to high n Ach boys. Thus there may possibly be a critical range of ages for optimal development of high n Ach; either above or below that range n Ach socialization is less effective and n Ach drops.

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The children also filled out a child-raising-practices questionnaire. Their questionnaire was directed at patterns of interaction and control between mother and child (Danziger, 1971). There were three subscales: (*a*) positive interaction, e.g., "plays games with me"; (*b*) positive control, e.g., "wants me to do better than other children at school"; (*c*) negative control, and negative interaction, e.g., "tells me how far I can go from home when I go out." Comparisons of these subscales were made by sex and level of n Ach. Distinct sex differences were found in the low n Ach group, while in the high n Ach group boys and girls reported similar patterns of interaction.

There were no significant differences between the high n Ach boys and girls on any of the subscales. Low n Ach boys and girls differed from each other on all three subscales: boys reported significantly less ($p < .001$) positive interaction and significantly more control, both positive ($p < .002$) and negative ($p < .002$), than did the girls.

Comparing low n Ach children to high n Ach children within sex groups, differences were found. The patterns of relations within the boys' group were different from those within the girls' group. Low n Ach boys reported significantly less positive interaction ($p < .001$) than high n Ach boys. The low n Ach boys also reported more control, both positive and negative, than did the high n Ach boys, but this difference did not reach significance. Low n Ach girls reported slightly less positive interaction, and less positive and negative control than did the high n Ach girls, but the differences did not reach statistical significance. Thus on the two control subscales there appears to be a continuum from the low n Ach girls who receive little control, to the high n Ach boys and girls receiving a moderate amount of control, to the low n Ach boys receiving what appears to be an extreme amount of control. The two ends of the continuum differ significantly from each other but not from the midpoints.

DISCUSSION

These results from the children's scale parallel the mastery demands reported by the mothers in relation to child-raising practices. This suggests once again the possibility of an optimal range for socialization of high n Ach, in this case a balance of interaction and support combined with controls, expectations, and achievement demands. Low n Ach boys were getting inadequate support and too much control. In fact they received significantly more control than positive interaction ($p < .005$). Low n Ach girls were receiving support but no goals or standards were being set and there were inadequate controls. They received significantly more positive interaction than either type of control ($p < .05$ for both). High n Ach boys showed no significant differences in the reported amounts of any of the types of interaction, which might be considered a balanced pattern of socialization. High n Ach girls reported significantly more positive interaction than negative control ($p < .025$), but none of the other comparisons are significant so the pattern for them is more balanced than for either of the low n Ach groups.

Generally it seems that the mother's level of n Ach is of relatively little importance in the socialization of n Ach in either boys or girls. The important factors appear to be expectations and demands for achievement and independence made at an appropriate age, in this sample around age 5, the age of school entrance, coupled with positive interaction or support and a moderate amount of control. These factors produced high n Ach in both boys and girls. Thus these results suggest that there may be an optimal pattern of socialization which produces high n Ach in both boys and girls.

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